
Ecotourism and Authenticity

Getting Away from It All?¹

by Paige West and
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Anthropologists have paid substantial attention to the environment and to tourism. However, they have paid less attention to their conjunction in ecotourism. This article focuses on Western ecotourism in relatively poor countries, approaching it as an expression of certain important Western values concerning the natural world and the people who live there. It places ecotourism within its broader political-economic context—neoliberalism and the institutions that reflect it, which foster its spread in the countries in question. Ecotourism may be seen as an exercise in power that can shape the natural world and the people who live in it in ways that contradict some of the values that it is supposed to express.

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Two topics that have attracted growing interest in anthropology in the past decade or two are tourism (e.g., Burns 1999, Graburn 1983, Nash 1996, Smith 1977, Stronza 2001) and the environment (e.g., Biersack 1999, Brosius 1999, Little 1999, Scoones 1999). This growing interest reflects changes in the Western societies that are the homes of most anthropologists, changes that appear to reflect the expansion and intensification of Western capitalist market systems. Regarding tourism, increasingly people see vacations as a necessary corrective for what they perceive as a more and more stressful working life. Increasingly also, people see the environment as under threat from the profit-seeking growth that drives corporations.

While these changing orientations to tourism and the environment have been reflected in anthropology, the discipline has paid less attention to their conjunction in ecotourism.² That conjunction is our concern. Ecotourism has many definitions (see France 1997:18–19; Honey 1999:6–7), but generally these revolve around the idea of leisure travel that has the object of enjoying features of what is seen as the natural environment in a way that has minimal negative consequences for the environment. Ecotourism is generally taken to include a socio-cultural element, the intention of seeing and interacting with people (often identified as "indigenous") whose customs and appearance seem exotic and attractive and doing so in a way that respects and benefits them. More loosely, ecotourists are people who travel to enjoy features of the environment among attractive exotic people in ways that are responsible environmentally and beneficial socioculturally.

Ecotourism is big business and appears to be the fastest-growing sector of the tourist industry. Just how big it is depends on how it is defined (e.g., Weaver 1999: 793–95). In an influential review using a broad definition, Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996:46–48) has reported that estimates for the global number of ecotourists ranged from 157 to 236 million, generating expenditures of up to US\$1.2 trillion. Using a narrower definition produces a smaller figure of US\$30 billion per year (Honey 1999:9). Even this lower figure, however, indicates that ecotourism is significant economically. In addition, it has achieved institutional legitimacy. Early in the 1990s the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* appeared, along with the organization now called the International Ecotourism Society, a combination of advocacy group and trade organization. The United Nations declared 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism, and that year saw the founding of the *Journal of Ecotourism*. In 2003 Stanford

in her research. Some of Carrier's research in Jamaica was part of the Department for International Development project "Ecological and Social Impacts in Planning Caribbean Marine-Reserves" (R6783).

2. There is anthropological work on ecotourism (e.g., Bandy 1996, Belsky 1999, Chapin 1990, Stronza 2001, Sutherland 1996, Vivanco 2001, Walley 2002, Young 1999), but the topic has not generated sufficient interest to develop into a coherent subdiscipline. We hope that the perspectives we present here will encourage such development.

University and the Institute for Policy Studies launched the Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development. Ecotourism, it appears, has arrived.

This is not surprising, given the way in which ecotourism and ecotourists are routinely portrayed. Their image is almost wholly benign environmentally, culturally, and economically. In terms of the environment, ecotourism is a celebration and appreciation of nature in a way that does not cause the sort of degradation associated with conventional mass tourism (e.g., Lindberg, Enriquez, and Sproule 1996, Parnwell 1993). Further, ecotourists normally pay entrance or user fees that help support parks, reserves, and other such projects. In terms of culture, ecotourism is not just the enjoyment of cultural difference but also encourages knowledge of and support for host groups. In contrast to conventional tourists (Gössling 1999:309, Koch 1997:218), ecotourists stay in facilities that are likely to be owned and managed by local people rather than multinational corporations and often eat local foods and consume local services. As the executive director of the International Ecotourism Society put it, ecotourism "should: 1) protect and benefit conservation; 2) benefit, respect, and help empower local communities; and 3) educate as well as entertain tourists" (Honey 2003).

Perhaps because of the relative youth of ecotourism and perhaps because it is both an industry and an object of academic study, work on the topic is fragmented, offering a number of ways in which it can be approached. For example, some research has focused on the industry aspects, such as the nature and quality of provision and environmental attraction that ecotourists expect (e.g., Khan 2003, Rudd and Tupper 2002). Some has investigated the relationship between ecotourism and local people's conventional livelihoods and forms of social organization (e.g., Akama, Lant, and Burnett 1996, Belsky 1999, Briassoulis 2002, Ghimire and Pimbert 1997, Koch 1997, McIvor 1997, Medina 2003, Stonich, Sorensen, and Hundt 1995). Some has investigated the motivations of ecotourists (e.g., Duffy 2002:chap. 2; Mowforth and Munt 1998:chap. 5; Munt 1994). Some considers the ways in which ecotourism construes the world, making it meaningful to ecotourists and profitable to the industry that serves them (such arguments are presented at length in Mowforth and Munt 1998).

Approaching Ecotourism

Of the variety of possible approaches, the one we find most intriguing sees ecotourism as the institutional expression of particular sets of late capitalist values in a particular political-economic climate. This approach situates ecotourism in its broader context and thus encourages us to consider the relationships among the rhetoric of ecotourism, the values of ecotourists, and the ways in which these are manifest in ecotourism projects. Obviously, we cannot treat all of these relationships adequately in the space available here. Equally, in the case studies we present, we cannot consider in depth the con-

sequences of the projects described for the professed ecotourism goals of environmental conservation and the empowerment of local people and maintenance of their ways of life. From what we say, however, it should be obvious that we are skeptical.

The particular climate we refer to is the ideology of neoliberalism, which has been especially potent recently in the sorts of countries to which ecotourists commonly go. Neoliberalism has been an important element of Western political-economic thought for some time (see Cockett 1994), so we can deal with it briefly here (for a good recent summary see Peet 2002:62–66). The core prescriptions of neoliberalism are "privatization, deregulation, and liberalization, all encapsulated within political beliefs about democracy, entrepreneurship, and individual freedom" (Peet 2002:65). These prescriptions indicate that neoliberalism has two pertinent aspects, the political and the economic. In its political aspect it stresses "the community" or, latterly, "civil society," local voluntary institutions and organizations, at the expense of state agencies. Those agencies are seen as lethargic, inefficient, and unresponsive, while local groups are seen as energetic, efficient, and democratic (cf. Fisher 1997). In its economic aspect, it demands the reduction of state financial power and fosters market-based models of political-economic and even social life (see Bromley 1994, McMichael 1998, and, for Jamaica, Edie 1991).

The economic side of neoliberalism has meant that poor tropical countries of the sort that we consider here have few resources available for environmental protection or rural development. For such countries, ecotourism looks particularly attractive. Developing the industry can increase national income; because ecotourists routinely visit rural sites and because the money they spend is expected to benefit local people, ecotourism encourages rural development; and because ecotourists pay user fees and the like, ecotourism increases the resources available for environmental protection (and not just in poor tropical countries; on the economic and institutional restructuring of Canada's parks, see Eagles 2002).

This conjunction in ecotourism of the environment and the market is reflected in a flurry of work that extends the category of fictitious commodities beyond land and labor (Polanyi 1957:chap. 6) to include nature and the environment. A country's natural environment is part of its "capital" (e.g., Costanza and Daley 1992), to be exploited in a rational capitalist way. This orientation is apparent when park managers are enjoined to learn more about who visits: "A fundamental figure for decision making is that of product volume. All production enterprises need thorough, accurate, and up-to-date data on the numbers and timing of the production and subsequent sale of their products" (Eagles 2002:144). It is apparent as well when whales become the object of whale-watching ecotourists, who can be expected to pay (Orams 2002, Hoyt and Hvenegaard 2002), and when rivers, marshland, beaches, and bays are given an economic value for those who visit them (Johnston et al. 2002) and even for those who stay away (Dharmaratne, Sang, and Walling 2000). All of this, of course, turns supposed eco-

tourist preferences into political power, for the government that fails to cater to their tastes risks losing their money (e.g., Orams 2002:esp. 376).

In being the vehicle by which ecotourist preferences are transmitted to destination countries, ecotourism tends to operate as a form of governance. It encourages a particular way of knowing people and things in pertinent parts of the world and identifies appropriate sorts of action and inaction in a potent and even authoritative way (see Mowforth and Munt 1998:44–83; on the environmental orientation associated with ecotourism as a form of governance, see Bryant 2002). While this governance aspect is important, our particular concern is the operation of ecotourism as a form of virtualism (Carrier and Miller 1998), not simply identifying aspects of the social and natural world but involving institutional structures and practices that seem likely to reshape them to conform to the virtual reality defined by important Western models of society and nature. This reshaping underlies what we see as an important contradiction in ecotourism: its tendency to lead not to the preservation of valued ecosystems but to the creation of landscapes that conform to important Western idealizations of nature through a market-oriented nature politics (see Wilson 1992) that results in “the creation of a product that fits the [ecotourist] market needs” (Eagles 2002:143; this process is described in Robbins and Fraser 2003). There is also a tendency for ecotourism to lead not to the support of distinctive local sociocultural beliefs and practices, valued by ecotourists because they represent alternatives to capitalist market systems, but to the spread and strengthening of those systems.

The most visible values that ecotourism expresses concern the natural environment, and those values are supposed to lead ecotourists both to appreciate and to protect nature. But “nature” is not a simple concept: Williams (1976:219) notoriously called it “perhaps the most complex word in the English language.” The view that ecotourists appear to hold is the modernist one, linked to the rise of industrial capitalism (described in, e.g., Escobar 1999; Ingold 1993, 1998; Neumann 1998: chap. 1; Smith 1990, 1996; see generally Carrier 2003: 5–11; Urry 1992). In this view, nature is separate from and prior to humanity and hence could and, in some renderings, should exist without human intervention. This is the view of nature that Cronon (1995:69–70) has called *Wilderness*, a social construction of the natural world that is “the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires” and one that Smith (1990:1) says guides the physical reconstruction of aspects of the natural environment. We shall refer to this view as *Nature*.

Because *Nature* is prior to humanity, it has implications for understandings of human history and the place of people in the world—understandings that feed back into ideas of *Nature*. These implications are brought out in a study of nature tourism in Australia, which has a frontier in its relatively recent history. The authors of this study (Waite, Lane, and Head 2003:527–30) argue that the concept of the frontier sees the colonial settlement of the country as separating the primordial and the

natural from the civilized and the historical: “By calling upon colonial discourses of primitivism and scientific progressivism, the frontier is culturally constructed as a disjunctive moment when both history and civilization are about to begin. The frontier is imagined as an ontological demarcation . . . between timeless (prehistory) and historicized land” (p. 529). While these authors are concerned with understandings of the material environs, the points they make can apply to sets of people as well. Those on the primordial side of the ontological demarcation are subject to what Mowforth and Munt (1998: 273–76) call “zooification,” becoming objects of fascination because they are seen as “natural and wild.”

This argument helps clarify some of the apparent anomalies in ecotourism. Ecotourists are supposed to be concerned with nature in the sense of the natural environment, the interconnected world around them. Doubtless some are. However, Waite, Lane, and Head’s argument suggests that many ecotourists may be doing something different—traveling to a liminal space for a look across the frontier. This helps account for the fact that, while the rhetoric is that of respecting and protecting the environment, these seem to be salient only once the destination is reached.³ It also helps resolve the apparent contradiction between a rhetoric that appreciates and supports exotic local communities and a practice that encourages the socioeconomic values associated with capitalist individualism.

Given what we have said about *Nature* and the frontier, it is reasonable to argue that ecotourists traveling to peer over the edge are concerned that what they experience be authentic, and the institutions of the industry, together with the neoliberal pressures and constraints that poor tropical countries confront, help ensure that they will be satisfied. But “authentic,” like “nature,” is a complex concept, especially with regard to tourism (e.g., Brown 1996; Cohen 1988, 2002; MacCannell 1973, 1999; Selwyn 1996; Wang 2000). Our argument is that the frame in which authenticity is judged is not likely to be that of the conservation biologist or environmental scientist or that of the anthropologist or local activist. Rather, we suggest that it is the framework of *Nature* and the frontier: the supposed primordial state of people and the world before civilization killed off the exotic plants and animals and transformed the “exotic” peoples.

We want to qualify the picture we have just painted. First, we have linked neoliberalism to the virtualism that we see in ecotourism. This reflects the present power of the ideology to frame the world and how people ought

3. Ecotourists to tropical countries arrive and depart by air, which has pronounced environmental costs. Gössling (1999) concluded that getting the average visitor to a tropical country and back used 205 kg of aircraft fuel and generated about 650 kg of CO₂ emissions (for data on travelers to New Zealand, see Becken 2002; see generally Mowforth and Munt 1998:197). This environmental cost is treated as an externality, not part of the environmental effects of the tourism (e.g., Eagles 2002:149). This apparent anomaly disappears if ecotourists are more concerned about experiencing *Nature* than about protecting the environment.

to act in it. However, it is important to remember that those who run parks and reserves can be under pressure to manage things in ways that appeal to visitors for reasons other than neoliberal dogma. The pressures and linkages recur, but their causes and consequences will vary with changing ideological and political-economic currents. As a result, the image in which pertinent bits of the world are shaped can be expected to vary. For example, British colonial rule involved the creation of game reserves that shaped local people and places to conform to British metropolitan expectations. Those expectations reflected the empire and the world that it contained and inflected, the relations of colonist and subject, and the relations of the wild and the civilized (see MacKenzie 1989, Neumann 1998; for the history of this process in northern Pakistan, see MacDonald 2004).

We also want to qualify our assertion that ecotourism operates as a form of virtualism. We hold that ecotourism tends to exert pressure on managers and planners to focus on activities and policies that reshape pertinent parts of the natural and cultural world in appropriate ways. However, we are not arguing that ecotourism efforts are necessarily successful: things can go wrong and projects may fail; tourist fashions can change; people in tourist destinations may have the resources to challenge them (e.g., Neumann 2000, Swain 1989). Further, to hold that there is pressure is not to assert that every ecotourism activity operates in that way or that all ecotourists actively desire that virtualism. In fact, we are confident that most would say that they intend no such thing. This contradiction between the rhetoric and the practice of ecotourism is one of the things that make it attractive to us, for it encourages us to see how the values in the rhetoric can become transmuted by the mechanisms through which they are expressed. We are concerned with the matrix of institutional and sociocultural forces in which ecotourism is enmeshed. These help account for the existence of ecotourism; they make certain courses of action more likely than others among those concerned with the natural environment and local people, among ecotourists, and in the ecotourism industry. Thus, we approach ecotourism as we do in order to shed some analytical light on how this growing industry helps propagate particular Western conceptions of Nature and social life in parts of the world where they are relatively alien.

We will illustrate this approach with two case studies. First, examining two places in Jamaica, Montego Bay and Negril, that are prime tourist destinations and contain national parks with oversight of coastal waters, we will show how institutional pressures have induced environmental managers to embrace ecotourism and to do so in a way that expresses and tends to reproduce specific Western understandings of that environment. Second, turning to the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area, in an isolated, thinly populated, and little-visited part of the highlands of Papua New Guinea, we will show how similar pressures caused people to abandon the local values and processes that ecotourism is supposed to celebrate and replace them with capitalist commercial val-

ues.⁴ Our approach to these places reflects our concern to understand a process of general interest in anthropology—how large-scale and even global forces like ecotourism and environmentalism work themselves out in people's lives (e.g., Harvey 1990; Miller 1994, 1997). Such understanding requires sustained engagement with these people, for often it is only in the interstices of their lives that we can uncover clues to the ways in which these forces are transmuted when they are injected into the complex contexts of their worlds.

Case Studies

JAMAICA

In their current form, the parks at Negril and Montego Bay were officially established by the Jamaican government in the 1990s after extensive agitation by the Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society and the Montego Bay Marine Park Trust—nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) dominated by people from the United States and Western Europe (see Carrier 2003). Neoliberalism was the context in which environmental activists and park managers at these sites had to operate, and it put pressure on them to encourage ecotourism and to shape the coastal waters in ways that would attract ecotourists. The pertinent institutional expression of neoliberalism was the Natural Resource Conservation Department, responsible for environment and conservation, and its history begins to show how external forces supported the neoliberal context in the country and helped foster ecotourism.

In 1991, largely as a result of pressure from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Natural Resource Conservation Authority Act changed the Natural Resource Conservation Department into the Natural Resource Conservation Authority (NRCA; subsequently it became the National Environment and Planning Agency). This change in name marked the conversion of a government department into what was supposed to be a quasi-autonomous authority that would protect the environment from illegitimate national politics by placing it in the reputedly non-political hands of local activists and specialists. Of course, this removal of the environment from politics was illusory. The USAID was behind the change from "department" to "authority," as we have said, and exercised influence over the NRCA through the "capacity-building" activities that it carried out from its offices on the top floor of the building that housed the NRCA.

The way in which the NRCA imposed the neoliberal context on environmentalists, including those who ran the parks at Montego Bay and Negril, is illustrated in a

4. West studied local villagers, environmentalists, development workers, tourists, missionaries, and government officials associated with Crater Mountain at various times between 1997 and 2003. Carrier studied environmental activists and managers in Montego Bay and Negril intermittently in the late 1990s.

description of it by a set of Jamaican environmentalists (Goreau et al. 1997:2093):

The Natural Resource Conservation Authority (NRCA) . . . recognizes that officials in the capital are less able than locally-based organizations to identify local problems, propose solutions, or implement them. Central control over environmental policy has historically resulted in decisions favoring short term financial interests of individuals and institutions which are well connected in the capital. Decision making is often protracted and may not address local concerns. Residents of the area feel increasingly dispossessed and powerless to control access to resources or halt degradation from development that adversely affects their quality of life, causing increasing alienation from the political process. NRCA has decided to increase the power of local communities to decide which forms of development, conservation, and environmental management best meet their long term needs.

This neoliberal vision echoed the increasing stress on participatory or community conservation, part of a rhetoric of “empowering” people (see Adams and Hulme 1998, Adams and McShane 1996, Christie and White 1997, Leach and Mearns 1996), a stress that has attracted criticism on a variety of grounds (for Jamaica, see Haley and Clayton 2003; see more generally Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 1998; Mowforth and Munt 1998:238–51; Ribot 1999; Smith 2001:chaps. 1 and 2). It also resonates with the cultural aspect of ecotourism, which values the small and local over the national and the global.

The NRCA’s espousing of this political side of neoliberalism led Jamaican conservationists and environmental managers to present their plans and activities in terms of civil society—that is, in terms of consultative groups, local engagement, and the like. The economic side of the ideology obliged them to think about those plans and activities in commercial terms. This was because the neoliberal demand for Jamaica to reorganize and cut its national spending led to substantial cuts in the NRCA’s budget in the closing years of the 1990s, and the amount of money it devoted to the country’s parks and environmental programs dropped accordingly. The magnitude of this reduction and the absolute amount of money involved are illustrated by figures from the Montego Bay Marine Park, charged with the oversight and protection of most of the bay’s waters. The park had to fund its own salaries, office accommodation, equipment, and all other costs, and in 1996 its operation and management budget was US\$85,000 (Dharmaratne, Sang, and Walling 2000:602). In 1997 and 1998 the NRCA gave the park about J\$2.7 million (about US\$78,000). In 1999 this dropped to about J\$450,000 (about US\$13,000), supplemented by about J\$125,000 (about US\$3,500) from a central fund of user fees collected at NRCA sites (J. Williams, personal communication). Neoliberalism stripped state oversight of the environment of much of its political legitimacy and most of its financial impact.

The result was that a new set of people became central to the thinking of managers at these two parks—foreign ecotourists and the firms that catered to them.

These parks sought money from overseas agencies such as the USAID, but the main financial strategy they wanted to pursue (and were pressured to pursue) was attracting ecotourists and charging them fees.⁵ For some time ecotourism had been presented as a way out of the financial difficulties caused by what conservationists saw as inadequate state support. The success stories that went the rounds in the Caribbean were those of two marine parks in the Netherlands Antilles, at Saba and Bonaire (see Dixon, Scura, and van’t Hof 1993), where the fees charged ecotourist divers produced substantial income and even financial independence (for detailed analyses see Framhein 1995 for Saba and Scura and van’t Hof 1993 for Bonaire).

The supposed attractions of ecotourism did not simply make the rounds among environmental activists and managers in Jamaica; they took practical form, shaping conservation policy and practice in ways that could subordinate environmental value and the interests of local resource users to the desire to generate a product that ecotourists would pay for. One such form was a study funded by the Organization of American States in the 1980s. This was a survey of possible sites for the first marine national park in Jamaica and was an important reason for the selection of Montego Bay. Expressing the neoliberal conjunction of commerce and conservation in ecotourism, the report made the obvious point that “marine parks can be pretty much self-supporting through a number of activities: snorkeling, SCUBA diving, glass bottom boat tours arranged for a fee. Usually the marine park organization will leave most of these activities to commercial dive operators and watersport centers. In that case, however, substantial revenues may be obtained from concessions” (O’Callaghan, Woodley, and Aiken 1988:37). From this perspective, Montego Bay was the clear choice. It was, as it remains, by far the largest tourist destination in Jamaica; in the late 1990s it had 56 hotels with over 5,000 rooms (Bunce and Gustavson 1998:75), and construction was continuing.

This report failed to address the position of local resource users in any sustained way, and it was challenged on environmental grounds. Important critics argued that a national park with limited financial and political resources would make no appreciable difference in an area as built-up and degraded as Montego Bay and should instead be located in an area where it could have a real environmental impact (K. Thacker, personal communication). For at least some environmentalists and marine biologists who worked in Jamaica, then, the report subordinated environmental to commercial considerations

5. It was not just conservationists who were attracted to ecotourism. Countries in the Caribbean, as in some other regions of the world, are heavily dependent on tourism to generate foreign exchange and know that mass tourism is heavily competitive. Such countries look longingly at a body of well-off foreign tourists who are not very sensitive to price and appear to spend fairly freely in their destination countries (see Pattulo 1996).

(on the potential conflict between environmental goals and commercial means, see Weinberg 1998).

This subordination also appeared in the thinking of park managers at Montego Bay and Negril about their respective coastal waters and their relationship to and stewardship of them. In essence, the coastal waters came to be seen as an economic resource that the parks were to exploit; the goal may have been conservation, but the means was commerce—ecotourism. It is not at all clear that activists and managers at these parks were happy to be compelled to attend to the commercial side; some complained bitterly about that compulsion (see Carrier 2003). However, the compulsion worked on them all.

This commercial orientation is clear in the 1998 management plan for the Montego Bay Marine Park (1998; the Negril management plan was broadly similar). The plan contained five “action plans,” and the largest by far was the fifth, “Financial Sustainability.” The goal was “to become financially sustainable through utilizing all possible sources of revenue, cost sharing and partnerships including fees, donations, grants, volunteerism and sales of goods and services, locally nationally and internationally, from private, corporate, government and institutional organizations.” This amounted to the branding and selling of Montego Bay’s waters, and it is elaborated in terms of a set of strategies: a visitor center at the park headquarters, an ecotourism program, merchandising and franchising, the generation of park products and services, the placing of collection boxes in the area and the institution of user permits, corporate fundraising, the establishment of a donor organization, sponsorship of public events and participation in existing public events, and the establishment of a park trust fund.

In making tourist demand the arbiter of the fate of these parks, the institutional matrix in which these managers operated made it more likely that they would take the next logical step and shape their management practices to cater to tourist demand. Accordingly, park managers in Montego Bay were anxious to manage the coastal waters so that the result would attract ecotourists and justify entrance fees. In pursuit of this goal, they wanted to learn more about consumer demand and especially about divers, a particularly salient body of ecotourists and the mainstay of the success stories of Saba and Bonaire. What did divers want? What made for a “good dive,” one worth paying for? The presence of the large and colorful fish that attract divers (Rudd and Tupper 2002) is doubtless one measure of the state of coastal waters. However, much of the health of Montego Bay depended on less-visible things: bacteria counts, sea urchin populations (especially important in Jamaica; see, e.g., Woodley and Sary 2003), sediment, and coral growth. Managers knew the importance of these things, but in their struggle to generate income they spent time and energy on more marketable features of the waters.

Tourist demand reflects not just a particular view of what the coastal waters ought to be but a particular view of who has a right to be there and who does not (West 2001). An official at the Negril park said that hotel operators were reporting complaints about Jamaicans in

small fishing boats in park waters. These complaints apparently reflected the view that nature ought to be pristine—that those waters ought to be free of human interference (for a similar situation elsewhere in the Caribbean, see Sandersen and Koester 2000:esp. 94–95). However, fishing was permitted in park waters, and the town landing beach was inside the park. The official resented the pressure of these complaints, which had to be taken seriously because support from the tourist industry was important to the park.⁶ Here too, then, we can see pressure on park managers to overwrite coastal waters with a new set of ecotourist meanings identifying certain sorts of people, fee-paying ecotourists, as properly in those waters—indeed, as necessary for their survival—and Jamaicans in small boats as belonging elsewhere (for parallels in Africa see Mowforth and Munt 1998:262–69).

We have argued that the neoliberal orientation of the context in which environmental managers operated obliged them to embrace ecotourism in order to fund their parks. The result was a tendency to shape park policies in such a way as to produce stretches of coastal waters that would appeal to ecotourists. Put differently, managers were under pressure to make their coastal waters approximate an idealization of nature that is important in Western society, one with large, visible wildlife and no human activity of the sort represented by local fishers.

CRATER MOUNTAIN

Ecotourism has a long history at Crater Mountain (West 2000, n.d.), and as at Montego Bay and Negril that history is dominated by outsiders. In the early 1970s Gillian Gillison conducted ethnographic fieldwork among the Gimi-speaking people of the area (see, e.g., Gillison 1980, 1993). At the time, she was married to an Australian photographer and environmental conservationist (Gillison 1993:xiii), and in 1981 he and another Australian built an ecotourist lodge in Ubaigubi, the site of her research. The lodge failed, but it generated interest in Crater Mountain among conservation enthusiasts that led, in 1994, to the creation of the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area under the Fauna (Protection and Control) Act of 1976. The area, which we will refer to simply as “Crater Mountain,” covers 2,700 square kilometers and is located on the borders of the Gulf, Chimbu, and Eastern Highlands provinces. It is held in traditional tenure by Gimi-speaking and Pawaia people, who have markedly different sociocultural beliefs and practices.

Designating Crater Mountain as a wildlife management area brought it and the lives and welfare of the local population into the modern world of “governmen-

6. These parks had an uneasy relationship with the tourist industry, which offered them little support. Both the nature of that relationship and the commercialization of conservation and nature that we describe were expressed by one activist with substantial experience in conservation organizations in Jamaica. He complained about what he saw as the unreasonable failure of the industry to pay for environmental protection. He said that their situation is “just like in any business. It [the environment] is a maintenance cost.”

tality" (Foucault 1991) in interesting ways.⁷ Like the Jamaican government, the Papua New Guinea government is rather weak, and rural places on the borders of its provinces often lack government attention. The creation of the management area brought Crater Mountain into the bureaucratic vision of transnational institutions that work like states (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). The NGO that managed Crater Mountain was the Research and Conservation Foundation of Papua New Guinea (hereafter RCF), founded by Gillison's husband and initially funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society, formerly known as the New York Zoological Society and located at the Bronx Zoo. The conservation funding for the area came as a grant from the Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) of about US\$490,000 between mid-1995 and mid-1998 and a further grant of US\$77,000 from the Wildlife Conservation Society. Following BCN advice, the RCF's grant application had stressed the development of ecotourism.

The role of the BCN in this case resembled the role of the USAID in Jamaica: it was the source of broader institutional pressures that affected a local conservation project. The nature of these pressures is apparent in the institutional matrix in which it operated. The BCN received funding from the Biodiversity Support Program (BSP), which operated from 1989 to 2002. This was a consortium, funded in part by the USAID, of the World Wildlife Fund, the Nature Conservancy, and the World Resources Institute. The consortium was "partnered" with two agencies of the U.S. government, which meant that staff from the two agencies worked with consortium staff in shaping funded projects. One of the agencies was the United States–Asia Environmental Partnership, run by the USAID and promoting "sustainable development" in Asia through public and private initiatives. The other was the U.S. Commercial Service, the international arm of the U.S. Department of Commerce, which works to help U.S. businesses compete in the global market by promoting the export of American goods and services and protecting the interests of those businesses internationally (Department of Commerce 1999, 2000).

The BCN's orientation was consonant with the neoliberal thrust of the institutions that supported it. Its goal was to support the growth of "enterprise-oriented" approaches to conservation, which reflected its "core hypothesis"—that if rural people were given business strategies that relied on the sustainable use of biological diversity for success and were linked to a "community of stakeholders" elsewhere, then they would work to conserve biological diversity so that they could reap its economic benefits (Biodiversity Support Program 1997,

7. In his discussion of the Philippines, Bryant (2002) says that the role of NGOs in the process of governmentality is unintended (and one of us [West 2000] has said the same), but we are not so sure. The policies and practices that we describe in this section certainly suggest intentionality on the part of some institutions and individuals, albeit not under the same "governmentality."

1999).⁸ Thus the broader institutional environment put pressure on those involved with Crater Mountain to embrace commercial activities to generate money. Although in Jamaica money was sought to fund the parks directly, the situation at Crater Mountain was similar in that there was institutional pressure to link conservation to selling the environment in one way or another. One of the ways in which this institutional pressure was manifested was the drive to attract Western ecotourists, and the centerpiece of that drive was a village lodge. Built of local materials by men from the six clans of Maimafu,⁹ the lodge was located at the top of the steepest airstrip on the island of New Guinea. Its history illustrates the ways in which the institutional context of this ecotourism project tended to incorporate people in Maimafu into the market system, by which we mean both economic markets and market rationality. It illustrates, then, how that project led not to the strengthening of local ways that the ecotourism vision proclaims but to efforts to impose capitalist rationality.

Maimafu has been linked to the market system since men began to migrate to the coast to work on plantations in the 1970s. However, the connection was relatively tenuous because it took place outside the village. The beginning of local production of coffee brought the market system closer to home and insinuated it more into village life, but there was no creation of a laboring class, nor did an ancillary commodity economy develop in any marked way. In contrast, the creation of the wildlife management area and the associated drive for ecotourism brought the market and its logic directly to the village.

The idea for a lodge began to percolate through Maimafu in the late 1980s, when men visited the ecotourist lodge in Ubaigubi and saw there the promise of "development." Early in 1990, a young American man working for the RCF, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Liz Claiborne–Art Ortenberg Foundation traveled to several villages in the area to describe the benefits of becoming part of a wildlife management area, including development and visits from tourists wanting to see the flora and fauna on the lands held by local residents. After much discussion, elder men from all of the clans in Maimafu decided to take part in the project.¹⁰ It was not until 1997, however, that ground was broken for the lodge. One important reason for the delay was tension about its location.

8. There are a number of assumptions at work here about local people and their use of and effects on their natural surroundings. The problematic nature of these assumptions is considered in MacDonald (2004) and Neumann (1998:106–9 and *passim*).

9. "Maimafu" was first used by Australian census officials to name several ridge-top settlements in which there was an odd (for the Highlands) residential pattern: men from different clans would live together if they had alliances (see Gillison 1993:29; McBride and McBride 1973:36). The settlements glossed as "Maimafu" have six different clan groups, which made collective decision-making complex and difficult.

10. Though not clearly opposed, women and younger men were not in favor of this project and tended to see other routes to modernity and markets as equally valid.

The committee of elders¹¹ who worked closely with the RCF spent long hours discussing and debating that location. One of their most important concerns was the perceived inequality between Namabu (a pseudonym), the clan that held the land on which the village airstrip is located, and other clans. Namabu was perceived as having benefited from development more than others. A Namabu man was the salaried agent for the missionary air services to the village; several RCF-owned houses, for which the clan got remuneration, were on Namabu land; the Namabu charged other villagers for the use of a coffee storage shed they owned at the airstrip. Furthermore, the Namabu were perceived as gaining status from having all RCF employees stay in houses on their land and as benefiting from having the local school located on their land, which meant that Namabu children had virtually no walk to school (while others had as much as a half-hour walk) and that the teachers, all from other places, had formed close relationships with the Namabu. Conscious of all of these benefits that the Namabu derived from conservation and local development, the committee decided that it would be best for the community if the lodge were not located next to the airstrip, on Namabu land, but constructed at Motai, a hamlet about a half-hour walk away that was home to lineages from four other clans. They reasoned that siting the lodge there would direct benefits to other parts of the village, with the people living closest to it being employed by the tourists more often, providing food for them more often (and receiving payment for this), and deriving status benefits from their association with tourists. Making this decision took almost two years, but when the location was finally agreed upon everyone was content, including the Namabu elders.

This decision reflected local concerns and values and was reached through local sociopolitical mechanisms (see, e.g., Gillison 1993, Godelier 1982, Godelier and Strathern 1991, Sahlins 1963, Salisbury 1956). These are the sorts of values and processes that ecotourism claims to value. However, the conservation biologists and other outsiders working at Crater Mountain assumed that capitalist values and processes would govern the decision that the people of Maimafu were to make. They assumed that the lodge would be located in terms of purely commercial factors: ease of access to the airstrip and to the projected village artifacts shop and the attractiveness of the view of the forest from the lodge. Events proved them right.

Villagers presented the decision on the location of the lodge to the director of the RCF early in 1997; she listened politely to the explanation for the choice and walked to the proposed location to survey it. Returning to the airstrip, she told the committee of elders and much of the rest of the village (which had turned up in celebration of her arrival) that the location they proposed was not suitable; it was "too far from the airstrip and tourists will not want to walk that far" and "the view

from the airstrip is much better." With this the case was closed and the location of the lodge at the airstrip was fixed. Two years of intense negotiations among members of different clans, several of which did not have good relations, were dismissed with a five-minute discussion.

The committee members whose decision was rejected put their resentment aside and worked together to build the lodge because of the promise of what was to come with ecotourism. However, once the lodge was constructed, another problem arose: who would cook and clean for the tourists? The committee, again after intense negotiations that took months, decided that with each new set of tourists a set of people from a different clan should work at the lodge and act as guides. Benefits would flow to one clan after another in this measured rotation. Again, however, local values and ways of making decisions were to be thwarted. When this staffing decision went to the RCF office for approval, the advisers to the RCF said that there was a better way: choosing one person to run the lodge and several men to be trained by an expert in leading tourist treks, cooking "bush dinners," and in general interacting with ecotourists.¹² Most of the money from the ecotourism would still flow to the committee of elders and from them would trickle down to their clans, but some of it would have to be diverted to pay the caretaker and guides.

Since the lodge was completed in 1997, tourists have not come in the hoards expected. Many of them have been Papua New Guinean conservation scientists associated with the RCF; several have been missionaries who live in more dangerous parts of PNG and who see rural, roadless Maimafu as an escape from the problems of the country; several have been ecotourists; the majority have been scientists conducting research at Crater Mountain. These scientists, RCF staff, and missionaries are not the cash-flush foreigners that the residents of Maimafu had imagined. Most of them have been on strict budgets owing either to low wages or to limited research grants.

While the lodge generated nothing close to its anticipate benefits, by the middle of 2003 it had generated the tension between clans that the elders had sought to avoid.¹³ The lodge was becoming identified as a Namabu project, and other clans had begun to plan their own lodges relatively far from the village. The residents of Maimafu had seen that the visitors so far were more interested in plants and animals than in people and deduced that lodges located near important natural sites might bring more tourists. This sort of interclan competition is not unusual in the PNG Highlands; indeed, it is what most anthropologists might expect. Although the RCF's decision about the location of the lodge helped to bring this tension about, it started to guide most regular tourists away from Maimafu because of it, arguing

12. The RCF's desire for trained lodge staff accords with ecotourists' demand for conventional personal service (Khan 2003:120). However, like that demand, it ignores the local values and practices that ecotourism claims to respect.

13. For another case in which overseas agencies imposed formal capitalist logic on a local ecotourist project and increased local tensions, see Mowforth and Munt (1998:253–55).

11. The Fauna (Protection and Control) Act calls for such local committees in wildlife management areas.

that competition and conflict were off-putting to tourists and that other villages in Crater Mountain were better behaved. Most RCF staff came to see the lodge in Maimafu as a failure and routinely blamed this on villagers.

Conclusions

"Ecotourism" covers many activities: visiting a national park in Montana, diving in the Caribbean, seeing Mayan ruins, staying at a village lodge in Papua New Guinea. Anthropologists studying such divergent places might well stress their particularities, but we consider the similarities intriguing. These reflect the common larger context of the marine reserves in Jamaica and the mountain forests in Papua New Guinea that we have described. That common context is the mixture of neoliberalism, Nature, and ecotourism and the governmental and non-governmental organizations and people who bring it to different parts of the world, and, as we have shown, it tends to produce common pressures.

The common pressure we have described is toward subordinating concern for environmental conservation and respect for local communities, which ecotourism is said to encourage, to concern for attracting ecotourists and their money. Ecotourists might well complain if they learned that environmental managers diverted time and energy from conserving the coastal environment to trying to figure out what made a dive worth paying for. They might well complain if they learned that officials replaced decisions based on local sociocultural values and processes with decisions based on commercial logic. However, given what we have said about the context in which these projects operated, they should not be surprised.

Because Jamaica and Papua New Guinea are different, the ways in which this common pressure is manifest are different. In Jamaica, when national agencies began to reflect neoliberal policies and legislation weakened the role of the national government in conservation, NGOs and other nonstate actors sought to take on quasi-governmental roles at a time when there was a global move to marry conservation with development (Sachs 1993). As state support for conservation dwindled late in the 1990s, NGOs became central to environmental management and ecotourism became central to their management strategies. At Crater Mountain, the lodge became attractive to those advocating or constrained by a market-based approach to conservation and that same move to conservation-as-development (West 2000, n.d.). The Westerners already working at Crater Mountain were given support by the same agency that was important in Jamaica, the USAID, through its funding of BCN, and ecotourism became the centerpiece of NGO work there.

The efforts to reshape coastal waters and local decisions were part of an effort to attract those who seem to want to experience the "moment when both history and civilization are about to begin" (Waite, Lane, and Head 2003:529) by standing at the edge of the present and viewing a prelapsarian past. The present in question is open markets and income-generating projects, the past a sim-

ple and pristine nature and culture, "an increasingly rare prize to be witnessed and captured before it [is] too late" (Gewertz and Errington 1991:42). And those who seek to attract ecotourists are obliged by the logic of the market to try to reshape the nature and culture on offer to fit this image.

Given what we have said about ecotourist desire, this reshaping entails an erasure through the process that Errington and Gewertz (2001, drawing on Scott 1998) call "generification." Environments and people come to be recognizable only to the extent that they fit the generic categories "Nature," "Exotic," and "Simple." Aspects of environments and people that do not fit the categories are reduced to irrelevance (sea urchins in Montego Bay) or even hindrance (Maimafu decision making). This does not, however, mean that every place becomes the same, leveled by neoliberal market logic, any more than it means that local people are totally powerless (Pred and Watts 1992, Swain 1989). Instead, it seems likely that places are distinguished by what Wilk (1995) calls "structures of common difference." The only differences that are meaningful are within the pertinent generic categories. Recognized natural diversity is the particular view from a village lodge, the kind of colorful fish that divers see. Recognized cultural diversity is the kind of bag on sale at the artifact shop and the kind of song people sing. Western conceptions of the relevant bits of the world, transmitted through NGOs and by specialist advisers and the organizations that employ them, through the bodies that fund them, and through the tourist market itself, arrive at destinations long before the ecotourists and shape those destinations to fit those conceptions.

Not all ecotourism projects operate in the way that we have described, and to speak of institutional pressures is to speak of tendencies rather than certainties. Detailed studies can help reveal the complex of local, national, and global forces that bear on particular projects and help chart the convergences and contradictions within and among these forces. It is the variety of these forces, convergences, and contradictions that makes ecotourism such a fascinating topic.

Comments

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West and Carrier argue persuasively that ecotourism is deeply problematic as a key to sustainable development and should be seen as an integral aspect of the current climate of neoliberal social and economic development. However, I do not agree that ecotourists necessarily view nature primarily as "wilderness" that is "separate from

and prior to humanity and hence could and, in some renderings, should exist without human intervention."

The notion of wilderness has played a major role in the development of nature preservation in countries such as the United States and Australia, where the founding of the nation-state has been linked with the historic conquest of a territory regarded as untamed wilderness. In such national contexts, the nature that is preserved in nature-area parks comes to represent the sort of wilderness landscape that the frontiersmen supposedly encountered and conquered. American nature-park ideals have become dominant internationally, as the United States has spearheaded a vibrant and well-organized nature-park movement for the past century, and this is undoubtedly reflected in the kinds of ecotourism ventures that receive support from international aid agencies such as USAID.

While this notion of nature may be dominant in certain countries, it is not the only one in the Western world, nor is it necessarily the most important concept of nature among ecotourists, as claimed by West and Carrier. The Western world is also characterized by a romantic/pastoral notion in which human beings are seen to be part of nature. Within this mode of thought, nature experiences are sought not in the untamed wilderness but rather in cultural landscapes that reflect centuries of close association between human beings and their physical environments. This understanding of nature has been influential in nature preservation movements in many European countries and led to the preservation of areas praised for the particular qualities they have acquired through sustained human interaction with the environment. This view of nature seems much closer to that which guides ecotourism. Thus, in ecotourism local populations and their ways of life are at least in principle, as West and Carrier note, regarded as an integral part of the ecosystems to be preserved and enjoyed, not as external, intruding elements to be eliminated.

If many ecotourists conceptualize nature not as wilderness but as a pastoral landscape or even an Edenic garden carefully tended by the local people, why do ecotourist developments so often end up with the form of exploitation of people and natural environments, that West and Carrier describe? One reason is probably, as they argue, that ecotourism as the preservation and enjoyment of nature by and for people is appropriated by ecotourism as the exploitation and capitalization of natural resources by investors selling a product to consumers. This is no doubt the case in many instances, but unlike mass tourism ecotourism is by nature a rather complex phenomenon characterized by a high degree of variation and, in some quarters, a good deal of idealism, so it is difficult to generalize on the basis of this article's examples.

Another reason for the failure of ecotourism to live up to its professed goal, however, can be found in the fact that the human landscapes that ecotourists are eager to enjoy may be quite different from those that the host populations cherish. This, of course, should come as no surprise to anthropologists, who, after all, make a point

of emphasizing the great variety in the ways in which human beings live with nature. It would therefore be naïve to expect that ecotourists, who for the most part derive from the economically developed Western world, would have an immediate understanding and appreciation of the ways in which people, for example, in a remote part of Papua New Guinea conceive of nature and wish to practice ecotourism. Most ecotourists would probably prefer a lodge located in a spot with a nice view and would not appreciate the significance of placing the lodge in a good spot in the local social landscape. This is not because ecotourists have no regard for the local population or because they reduce local people to primitives who are best viewed as part of the wilderness. It is quite simply because they have little knowledge of or experience with local ways of life in Papua New Guinea and the approach to ecotourism that they may foster. Anthropology can play an important role in helping to create an appreciation of the diversity in human landscapes and the related great variety in approaches to ecotourist developments that can be enjoyed if ecotourism takes seriously its concern with local perspectives and practices. This may be a small but significant next step in a critical engagement with this rapidly growing industry.

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West and Carrier have made great strides in applying theory to the analysis of ecotourism. For over a decade ecotourism has played on our hopes and imaginations as a more progressive approach to development, a strategy that purports to meet people's needs while also protecting nature (however defined), delivering a "sustainable" future replete with intact ecosystems, strong local traditions, and robust economies. At least on the surface, it seems to value cultural traditions, protect the resources it exploits, and even redirect power and profit from the elite to the rural, the poor, the indigenous, the local, and the disenfranchised. West and Carrier are skeptical. With qualitative and cross-cultural evidence, they effectively contrast ethnographic realities of ecotourism with promises of change and note the persistence of the same neoliberal tenets that have guided development all along. They reveal ecotourism as yet another "exercise in power," one more instrument for reinforcing Western values about nature and culture and question whether it is truly a departure from business as usual.

I wonder, however, if the projects they describe in Jamaica and Papua New Guinea were aimed at empowerment at all. From my reading, both projects were designed to generate income and in that way provide economic incentives for conservation. The goals of social justice and shared decision-making seem to have been weak if not absent. Where ecotourism operations truly pursue the goal of devolving power, decisions about how

nature and culture should be represented, displayed, and shared with (or shielded from) tourists should be made in close collaboration with if not solely by local leaders and communities. Short of this, I agree, ecotourism is much like any other form of tourism.

Partnerships between private companies or NGOs and communities are increasingly providing opportunities for local control or at least genuine shared decision-making. In partnerships of this kind in Ecuador (Kapawi), Peru (Posada Amazonas), and Bolivia (Chalalan), admittedly, a capitalist rationality has been introduced and in some ways imposed on the communities. Local leaders in all three sites now talk about marketing niches, cost-benefit analyses, client satisfaction, product quality control, and other concepts that were certainly not standard to local everyday life before tourism. Nevertheless, local ways of thinking, interacting, and decision making have also been maintained and even newly valued. Leaders in the Native Community of Infierno in Peru, for example, who have partnered with the private company Rainforest Expeditions to manage Posada Amazonas, have separate types of decision-making processes for lodge-related and community matters presided over by different sets of community leaders. The tour operators, who came to the joint venture with undeniably Western and rationalist strategies for maximizing efficiency and profit, have also significantly changed the way they do business. They now talk about learning to be more patient, respecting the need for consensus, and listening more closely to what local leaders say, especially with regard to creating appropriate incentives and sanctions, building quality and authenticity, sharing benefits and reinvesting, and other lodge-related matters. They also now seek to generate other kinds of benefits beyond profit, such as health care, education, and strengthened community leadership. Both partners say that they cooperate and share decisions because they have learned that locally made decisions are ultimately more effective either for maximizing profit and efficiency or for broader, more traditional concerns such as managing precisely the kind of social conflicts described in the case of Maimafu.

The decisions imposed on the people of Maimafu had to do with managing ecotourism, an activity in which they had had little experience. It was not traditional beliefs but contemporary and practical ideas about building a lodge that were inappropriately and insensitively ignored. While I am strongly sympathetic to the point that local decisions should have been respected and heeded, I have also been admonished many times as an anthropologist to "remember the bottom line." I do not mean that we should not care about the ways in which the drive for profit supplants local values. Rather, I am suggesting that we explore the possibilities for strategic alliances in which local concerns and values, while not always heeded, are always considered carefully against a range of outcomes that affect them above and beyond the narrow goal of profits.

West and Carrier have described two cases in which "concern for environmental conservation and respect for local communities" and "attracting ecotourists and their

money" are contradictory. My question is whether these two goals must always conflict. Our analyses should, like theirs, be skeptical and generalizing, but we should also look for particularities and exceptions, as these may be the catalysts for change on an otherwise dismal horizon. Ecotourism endeavors that are participatory and truly intent on shifting power away from elites may eventually be able to alter capitalist structures and values. Anything short of this, as West and Carrier attest, is not so much empowerment as co-optation.

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8 v 04

The case studies in this article provide a fascinating look at the roles of global governance, globalization, local governments, and transnational NGOs in the construction and management of ecotourism sites as exercises in neoliberal economics. This evocation of neoliberal capitalism is useful but needs to be articulated with other ideas, such as authenticity. The word "authenticity" in the title suggests that the authors intend to take a timely look at a hot topic in tourism-studies discourse from an anthropological perspective, but their discussion of "authenticity" occupies only a paragraph and is not integrated into the case studies or conclusions. For West and Carrier, in the context of ecotourists' practice "the framework in which authenticity is judged . . . is the framework of Nature and the frontier: the supposed primordial state of people and the world." Certainly this understanding is well represented in the literature, as are a number of other nuanced interpretations that incorporate political consciousness and would complement it. Cohen (2002), for example, in a work that they cite but do not explore, takes the primordial exotic framing of authenticity found in sustainable ecotourism and asks if an emphasis on keeping things pristine acts as an instrument of power over valuable environmental and cultural resources. He also suggests that rhetoric on authenticity and sustainability legitimizes the consumption of these resources by wealthy elites. This is an interesting train of thought, and following it would have enhanced the conclusions drawn by West and Carrier.

Tourism studies is a multidisciplinary field. Perhaps, instead of arguing that anthropologists have not integrated their work on the environment and tourism into the study of ecotourism, it would be more productive to acknowledge that the study of ecotourism engages anthropologists, geographers, ecologists, economists, and sociologists, among others, as is well documented by West and Carrier's thorough review. One approach to tourism development that I am surprised that they do not notice comes out of political ecology, especially the work of anthropologist Barbara Johnston (1993, 1997). Ecofeminism provides another fruitful approach to investigating political questions of tourism, culture, and the environment (Swain and Swain 2002, Humberstone

2004), taking into consideration that environmental exploitation and protection have gendered aspects. These perspectives are especially important when trying to understand how and why some indigenous groups have succeeded in controlling tourism development on their lands.

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In *Dialectics of Nature* Friedrich Engels presented the view, since discredited in many circles, that the laws of dialectics could be seen operating within the laws of nature. A more familiar and acceptable notion perhaps is that dialectical processes work *on* nature—that nature obtain its form, meaning, and significance through transformative processes of human labor within a set of social relations that in turn give rise to and are nested within specific and identifiable social formations. What West and Carrier have done in this valuable article is to sketch out a framework for the comparative understanding of the postmodern, neoliberal context of the appropriation of nature under regimes of tourist capitalism located in weak, dependent states. At the same time, a subtext is a warning to ecotourism promoters, politicians, and social scientists alike about the dangers of seeing “nature” as an actor in its own right and its obverse, conceiving of “nature” as separable from the human interests and activities that provide its contours and make it knowable.

What apparently occurs in the ecotourism exchange is the commodification of the tourists’ desire to appropriate nature while seeing themselves as nonpredatory. This construction of the consumer entails catering to the tourists’ gaze and (re)presenting nature as spectacle (Ryan, Hughes, and Chirgwin 2000). The unpredictable is made predictable and the inaccessible accessible but (re)presented with all the hallmarks of the exotic: “The exotic may be a false testimony of an ever-beckoning frontier, to the inexhaustible scale of a planet fully mapped, fully inhabited and clearly bounded. The exotic is a source of hope as well as of fear. It is an image which asserts infinite possibilities for social transformation, culture reconstruction, and geographical escape” (Foster 1982:21). In this process the two ends of the continuum from commodification to what Kopytoff (1986) calls “singularization” get folded over onto each other, and resolution of the inherent contradictions is delayed. This is perfectly consistent with flexible accumulation under globalizing postmodern capitalism. Foster goes on to say that the exotic “is a symbol and a concept which fits neatly into the ecology of meaning that is western culture, no doubt a concept which non-western cultures would find odd and exotic.” What West and Carrier’s material suggests is that managers in ecotourism destinations now try to understand the concepts of the exotic held by would-be tourists and pitch their product ac-

cordingly. This includes no doubt more than a little cultural evolutionism in which local people, flora, and fauna are conflated and a place is branded as being the way things used to be, a state of nature. Even normally unreflexive anthropological heirs of Rousseau can see what is going on here.

Yet, I found myself wishing that West and Carrier had cast their eyes somewhat “lower” conceptually and in terms of evidence. The approach via virtualism (Carrier and Miller 1998) might be queried for just how it is that exploitation occurs. At the level of exchange? Through unequal trade? And how, specifically, are profits generated for the First World? Some of these questions are reminiscent of interrogations of dependency theory, which is still profitably used to critique mass tourism while favorably evaluating ecotourism (Khan 1997).

Some of these difficulties could be resolved by more “contextual”/historical treatment of both Jamaica and Papua New Guinea that would show not only their internal diversity but their distinctiveness and their differential incorporation into the world economy. West and Carrier write that “because Jamaica and PNG are different, the ways in which this common pressure is manifest are different.” But if they are different, why would we expect them to be under the same “pressure”? Can we really equate a Jamaican ideology of the environment and its exploitability after 300 years of capitalism with the particular local experience in Papua New Guinea described in the article, which really looks like the beginnings of the clash between capitalism and other modes of production? Understanding their differential incorporation into the world economy and differing geopolitical realities we might also understand the lack of viable alternatives that faces development planners in these countries and some of the parameters that pervade their rationalities. Some difficulties could also be resolved through the consideration of ethnographic evidence. I would like to have heard the voices of discerning potential and actual ecotourists, Jamaican tourism managers, Maimafu decision makers, and virtualizing hacks and spin doctors. Even if some or all of their opinions and justifications are demonstrably false, we need a window into their subjectivities and motivations.

This being said, it is a rare article that outlines a research program and leads us in the direction of the program’s essential questions. This is just such an article. The next step should be to treat what it says as a set of hypotheses to be tested with serious historical and ethnographic research.

Reply

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We want to begin by thanking the commentators for the time they have taken to produce their thoughtful and

helpful comments on our paper. They have led us to reflect carefully on what we might want to do next in elaborating and exploring the issues laid out in it. In our response, we will restrict ourselves to the main issue that they raise: that our paper is too programmatic, that we use too big a brush to paint too generic a picture.

Olwig argues that the "Wilderness" perspective is not the only one through which Western tourists (and park managers and planners) see ecosystems and rural peoples; the "romantic/pastoral notion of nature in which human beings are seen to be a part of nature" is also important. While we agree, we do not think that it is dominant in the parts of the world that we consider. In New Guinea—historically likened to both Eden and wilderness in the same breath (Simpson 1955:4)—contemporary conservation interventions and ecotourism ventures turn on the notion of a nature-culture complex on the cusp of the modern: things are slipping away before our eyes and need protection and documentation. This is not Olwig's humanized pastoral nature but an imagined window onto our evolutionary past; the romanticism at work is not that of the English countryside but that of a disappearing Eden (Gewertz and Errington 1991).

Stronza wonders if social justice and empowerment were the goals of the projects we discuss, and she points to ecotourism projects in Latin America, very different from the ones we describe, in which local people have significant power over the operation of the venture. Perhaps perversely from her perspective, we would say that social justice and empowerment *are* the goals. In the neoliberal worldview (Carrier 1997, Cockett 1994, Hirschman 1977), market economies, cash income, and market choice are vehicles of social justice and empowerment. We think that the power that this perspective has among NGOs and funding agencies, planners, and managers means that it will be difficult to achieve the kinds of social justice that Stronza wants. She reminds us that often "the drive for profit supplants local values," and we would argue that when this is the case social justice is unlikely.

Swain wishes that we had spent more time on the notion of authenticity as it relates to ecotourism and neoliberal economics. We see this as an area of needed future research. Neither of us had extensive data collected from tourists at the time the paper was written, and we see the question of authenticity and how it is imagined and desired as very much tied to ethnographic research with ecotourists themselves (but see Duffy 2002). She also says that greater attention to writings by political ecologists and ecofeminists would have helped us to place the cases we describe in a broader context and see how other ecotourism ventures work differently.

Yelvington also wishes that we had paid more attention to the ecotourists and tourism promoters implicated in the processes we describe so as to produce a more nuanced analysis of our cases.

Certainly, with the few exceptions mentioned above, we agree with the thrust of the comments. "Wilderness" means something different among those who have a fron-

tier in their national self-conception than it does among those without one. There are ecotourism projects where local groups exercise substantial control and therefore are able to benefit in ways that seem unlikely for Maimafu villagers and Jamaican fishers. Ecotourism is a complex process, and understanding it requires a broader range of intellectual resources than members of a single discipline normally can muster. And certainly attending to the tourists and the promoters would allow us to see the other side of the ventures that we describe, the marketers' and consumers' side, which might provide a perspective rather different from the one we adopted.

And yet, we are not entirely sure where our agreement would lead us. The concern of our paper was not a survey of possible sorts of ecotourism ventures or ecotourists. Rather, it was, as Yelvington says, to lay out a research program and, as he charitably puts it, to point readers "in the direction of that program's essential questions." This is not the most subtle way to proceed: necessarily, presenting a research program involves a degree of simplification. However, if we are to encourage anthropologists to pay more attention to ecotourism as a topic of study, we think the simplification is justified. We think that ecotourism involves an array of intriguing processes that interest anthropologists (and, as Swain reminds us, members of many other disciplines): understandings of the surroundings, the exotic and authentic, tourism, the expansion of consumer capitalism, political economy, and so on. In saying this, we do not mean to dismiss what these commentators say. Rather, we take their comments as pointing to the questions that our paper raises—questions that we hope people will be able to address in their own work, just as we hope to address them in our own.

We want, however, to close on a more problematic note. To a significant degree, we were motivated to write our paper by our awareness of important institutional pressures on places such as Jamaica and Papua New Guinea and many other countries of the poor, tropical world. These pressures are channeled through a number of different institutions, some of them governmental (e.g., the United States Agency for International Development) and some of them not (e.g., the World Bank, some global environmental organizations). These pressures are not determinate. Rather, as we said in the paper, they make certain sorts of outcomes more likely than others, and the more likely outcomes are, we think, of the sort we described in Maimafu and in Jamaica, in spite (as we also said) of the desires of those who travel to these places. We would like to think that these pressures can be evaded or countered in the way that appears in the projects Stronza describes. But we also think that these pressures will become more insistent the more popular ecotourism becomes. Its growing popularity is likely to be accompanied by greater involvement and investment from large travel and tourism corporations with their own interests and concerns, and evading or countering these pressures will be inordinately difficult if they are not recognized.

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